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THE DOCTRINES OF
GRACE AND JUSTICE

EQUALLY

ESSENTIAL TO THE PURE GOSPEL:

WITH

SOME REMARKS

ON THE MISCHIEVOUS DIVISIONS
CAUSED AMONG CHRISTIANS BY PARTING
THOSE DOCTRINES.

BEING

An Introduction to a Plan of Réconciliation between
the Defenders of the Doctrines of *partial Grace*,
commonly called *Calvinists*; and the Defenders of
the Doctrines of *impartial Justice*, commonly called
Arminians.

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THE
DOCTRINES
OF
GRACE and JUSTICE, &c.

SECTION I.

A plain account of the Gospel in general, and of the various dispensations, into which it branches itself.—The gospel holds forth the doctrines of Justice, as well as the doctrines of Grace. An opposition to this capital Truth gave rise to the controversy about the Minutes.—An answer to an objection of those, who suppose, that the gospel consists only of doctrines of Grace.

IF a judicious mariner who has sailed round the world, sees with pleasure and improvement a *map*, which exhibits in one point of view, the shape and proportion of the wide seas, in crossing of which he has spent some years: a judicious protestant may profitably look upon a *doctrinal map* [if I may be allowed the expression] which places before him in diminutive proportion, the windings of a controversy, which, like a noisy impetuous torrent, has disturbed the churches of Christ for fourteen hundred
B years

years, and carried religious desolation thro' the four parts of the globe : but more especially if this map exhibits with some degree of accuracy, the boundaries of truth, the crooked shores of the sea of error, the haven of peace, and the rocks rendered famous by the doctrinal wrecks of myriads of unwary Evangelists. Without any apology therefore, I shall lay before the reader a plain account of the primitive catholic gospel, and its various dispensations.

THE GOSPEL, in general, is a divine system of Truth, which [with various degrees of evidence] points out to sinners the way of eternal salvation, agreeable to the *mercy* and *justice* of a *holy* God; and therefore the gospel in general, is an assemblage of *holy doctrines* of GRACE, and *gracious doctrines* of JUSTICE. This is the idea, which our Lord himself gives us of it, in Mark xvi. 16. For though he speaks there of the peculiar Gospel-dispensation, which he opened, his words may, in some sense, be applied to every gospel dispensation. *Preach the GOSPEL.—He that believeth* [in the light of his dispensation, supposing he does it *with the heart unto righteousness*] *shall be saved*, according to the privileges of his dispensation : Here you have a holy doctrine of GRACE : *but he that believeth not shall be damned* : here you have a gracious doctrine of *justice*. For [supposing man has a *gracious* capacity to *believe in the light* of his dispensation] there is no antinomian grace in the promise, and no free-wrath in the threatening, which compose what our Lord calls *the gospel* : but the *conditional* promise exhibits a *righteous* doctrine of *grace*, and the *conditional* threatening displays a *gracious* doctrine of *justice*.

THE GOSPEL, in general, branches itself out into four capital dispensations, the last of which is most eminently called *the gospel*, because it includes and perfects all the preceding displays of God's grace and justice towards man. Take we a view of these four dispensations, beginning at the lowest, viz. *Gentilism*.

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I. GENTILISM [which is frequently called *natural religion*, and might with propriety be called *the gospel of the gentiles*] *Gentilism*, I say, is a dispensation of grace and justice, which St. Peter preaches and describes in these words: *In every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness* [according to his light] *is accepted of him*: these words contain an *holy doctrine of GRACE*, which is inseparably connected with this *holy doctrine of JUSTICE*: *In every nation he that searcheth NOT God, and worketh NOT righteousness* [according to his light] *is NOT accepted of him*.

II. JUDAISM, which is frequently called the *Mosaic dispensation*, or, *the law* [that is, according to the first meaning of the hebrew word תורה, *the Doctrine, or the Instruction*] and which might with propriety be called *the Jewish Gospel*;—JUDAISM, I say, is that particular display of the doctrines of grace and justice, which was chiefly calculated for the meridian of Canaan, and is contained in the old testament; but especially in the five books of Moses. The prophet Samuel sums it all up in these words, *Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart* [according to the law, i. e. doctrine of Moses] *for consider how great things he hath done for you* [his peculiar people:] *but if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed*, 1 Sam. xii. 24. In this gospel dispensation also, the doctrine of grace goes hand in hand with the doctrine of justice. Every book in the old testament confirms the truth of this assertion.

III. THE GOSPEL of John the Baptist, which is commonly called the BAPTISM OF JOHN, in connexion with THE GOSPEL, or baptism, which the apostles preached, before Christ opened the glorious baptism of his own spirit on the day of pentecost;—this gospel-dispensation, I say, is the Jewish gospel improved into INFANT-CHRISTIANITY. Or, if you please, it is christianity falling short of that *indwelling power from on high*, which is called *The kingdom of God come with power*. This gospel is

chiefly found in the four gospels. It clearly points out the person of Christ, gives us his history, holds forth his mediatorial law ; and, leading on to the perfection of christianity, displays with increasing light : (1) The doctrines of GRACE, which kindly call the chief of sinners to eternal salvation thro' the practicable means of repentance, faith, and obedience : And (2) The doctrines of JUSTICE, which awfully threaten sinners with destruction, if they finally neglect to repent, believe, and obey.

The capital difference between *this* gospel-dispensation, and the Jewish gospel, consists in this : The *jewish* gospel holds forth *Christ about to come*, in types and prophecies ; but *this* gospel displays the fulfilment of the Jewish prophecies, and without a typical veil points out *Christ already come*. Again : The *political* part of the Jewish gospel admits of some temporary indulgences, with respect to divorce the plurality of wives, &c. which indulgences are repealed in the christian institution, where morality is carried to the greatest height, and enforced by the strongest motives. But, on the other hand, the *ceremonial* part of the Gospel of Christ grants us many indulgences with respect to sabbaths, festivals, washings, meats, places of worship, &c. For it binds upon us only the two unbloody significant rites, which the scriptures call *Baptism* and the *Lord's-supper* ; freeing us from shedding human blood in circumcision, and the blood of beasts in daily sacrifices : an important *freedom* this, which St. Paul calls *The [ceremonial] liberty where-with Christ hath made us free*, and for which he so strenuously contends against the judaizing preachers, who would bring his Galatian converts under the bloody yoke of circumcision, and Jewish bondage.

IV. THE [PERFECT] GOSPEL OF CHRIST is frequently called THE GOSPEL only, on account of its fulness, and because it contains whatever is excellent in the above-described gospel dispensations. We may truly say therefore, that *perfect christianity*, or the *complete gospel of Christ*, is *gentilism, judaism, and*
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the baptism of John, arrived at their *full maturity*. This *perfected gospel* is found then, initially in the four books, which bear the name of *gospel*, and perfectly in the *Acts of the apostles*, and the *Epistles*. The difference between this *perfected gospel*, and the *gospel*, which was preached before the day of pentecost, consists in this capital article: Before that day, our Lord and his forerunner, John the Baptist, foretold, that Christ *should baptize with the Holy Ghost*; and Christ *promised* the indwelling Spirit. He said, *He dwelleth with you, and shall [then] be in you.—Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence.* But the *full gospel* of Christ takes in the *full dispensation* of Christ's Spirit, as well as the full history of Christ's life, death, and resurrection; comprehending the glad news of the *descent of the Holy Ghost*, as well as the joyful tidings of the *ascension of the Son*: and therefore, it's distinguishing character is thus laid down by St. Peter, *Jesus, being by the right hand of God EXALTED, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. The promise is unto you [that repent and believe.] We are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God [since the day of pentecost] hath given to them, that obey him*: for before Christ's ascension, the evangelists could say, *The Holy Ghost is not yet given [in it's christian fulness,] because Christ is not yet GLORIFIED.* Compare Acts ii. 33, &c, with Acts v. 32, and John vii. 39.

This *gospel* is the richest display of divine *Grace* and *Justice*, which takes place among men in the present state of things. For Christ's sake *the Holy Ghost* is given as an indwelling, sanctifying Comforter. Here is the highest doctrine of *Grace*! He is thus given to them that obey; and, of consequence, he is refused to the disobedient. Here is the highest doctrine of *Justice*, so far as the purpose of God, according to the elections of grace and justice, actually takes place in this life, before the second

coming of Christ. These two last clauses are of peculiar importance.

(1) I say *in this life*, because, after death, two great dispensations, of Grace and Justice will yet take place, with respect to every man: the one in the day of DEATH, when Christ will say to each of us, *Thou shalt be with me in paradise*, or, *Thou shalt go to thy own place*: and the other, in the day of JUDGMENT, when our Lord will add, *Come, ye blessed*, or *Go, ye cursed*. Then shall the gospel-mystery of God, which equally displays the doctrines of Grace and of Justice, be fully accomplished.

(2) I have added the clause, *before the second coming of Christ*, because in the Psalms, Prophets, Acts, Epistles, and especially in the Revelation, we have a variety of promises, that, *in the day of his displayed power*, Christ will come in his glory, to judge among the heathen, to wound even kings in the day of his wrath, to root up the wicked, to fill the places with their dead bodies, to smite in sunder Antichrist, and the heads over divers countries, and to lift up his triumphant head, on this very earth, where he once bowed his wounded head, and gave up the ghost. Compare Psalm cx. with Acts i. 11.—2 Thess. i. 10.—Rev. xix. &c. In that great day, another gospel-dispensation shall take place. We have it now in prophecy, as the jews had the gospel of Christ's first advent: but when Christ shall come to destroy the wicked, to be [actually] glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe;—in that day, ministers of the gospel shall no more prophesy, but, speaking a plain, historical truth, they shall lift up their voices, as the voice of many waters and mighty thunders, saying, *Allerujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth,—the marriage of the Lamb is come,—his wife [the church of the first-born] has made herself ready:—Blessed and holy is he, that has part in the first resurrection;—he REIGNS with Christ a thousand years.—Blessed are the meek, for they do inherit the earth.—The times of refreshing ARE come, and he HAS SENT*

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Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you; whom the heaven DID receive till this solemn season. But now are come the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began. Rev. xix. xx. Matt. v. 5. Acts iii. 19, &c. May the Lord hasten this gospel-dispensation! And, till it take place, may the Spirit and the Bride say, COME!

This being premised, it will not be difficult to give the reader a just idea of the grand controversy, which has torn the churches of Christ, from the days of Augustin and Pelagius, and which has lately been revived among us, on the following occasion.

In the year 1770, Mr. Wesley [in the *Minutes* of a conference, which he held with the preachers in his connexion] advanced some propositions, the manifest tendency of which is to assert, that *the doctrines of JUSTICE* are an essential part of the gospel; and that, when we have been afraid to preach them, as well as *the doctrines of GRACE*, we have been partial dispensers of the truth, and have leaned too much towards *Calvinism*; that is, towards a system of doctrine, which, in a great degree, explains away *the doctrines of JUSTICE*, to make more room for *the doctrines of GRACE*.

Some good people, who imagined that the *doctrines of IMPARTIAL JUSTICE* have little or nothing to do with *the gospel*, were not only highly displeased with Mr. Wesley's propositions, but very greatly alarmed at the word *merit*, which he warily used in one of them, to intimate that the *doctrines of justice* and *the day of judgment* must fall to the ground, if EVERY KIND of *merit* or *desert* is banished from the gospel; *Justice* being a virtue which, from an impartial tribunal, renders to every man according to his WORKS, that is, according to his *worthiness* or *unworthiness*, or, as some express it, according to his *merit* or *demerit*.

A regard for the *doctrines of justice*, and a fear lest *antinomian doctrines of grace*, and dreadful doctrines of

of *free-wrath*, should be still entertained by my friends, as the *genuine* doctrines of grace, engaged me to vindicate those obnoxious propositions, or rather, *the doctrines of JUSTICE*, held forth therein. And this, I hope, I have done in a series of *Checks to Antinomianism*—or *of Tracts against an *unscriptural* doctrine of grace,—a *doctrine of GRACE* torn from the scripture-*doctrine of JUSTICE*. In order to rescue the doctrines of *justice*, I have endeavoured to prove that no man is born an absolute reprobate in *Calvin's* sense of the word; that *God is loving to every man* for Christ's sake; and that, of consequence, there is a gospel-dispensation for every man, tho' it should be only that which is called *Gentilism*. I have shewn the cruelty of those opinions, which directly or indirectly doom to eternal perdition all the heathens, who never read the law of Moses, or heard the gospel of *Christ*. I have evinced by a variety of arguments, that nothing can be more unscriptural than to represent the law of Moses [i. e. the *Jewish* gospel] as a *GRACELESS* doctrine of *justice*; and the law of Christ [or the *Christian* gospel] as a *LAWLESS* doctrine of *grace*. By this means I have defended, so far as lay in me, both the *Jewish* doctrines of *grace* and the *Christian* doctrines of *justice*. And by demonstrating, that the scripture-*doctrines of GRACE* are inseparably connected with the scripture-*doctrines of JUSTICE*, I flatter myself to have opened the way for the re-union of the two partial gospels of the day; the capital error of which consists either in excluding the doctrines of *Grace* from the doctrines of *Justice*, which is the error of all rigid free-willers;—or in excluding the doctrines of *Justice* from the doctrines of *Grace*, which is the mistake of all rigid bound-willers.

“What,” [says one of these partial defenders of the doctrines of Grace] “Will you still persist to legalize the gospel? Do you not know, that the word GOSPEL, in the original, means GOOD news, or a GOOD message, and therefore must denote doc-

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" *trines of GRACE* abstracted from all the severity of
 " what you call *the doctrines of JUSTICE* ?"—To
 this plausible objection, which has deluded thousands
 of simple souls, I answer :

(1.) A royal proclamation may be called a good
proclamation, tho' it does not turn the king's subjects
 into lawless favourites, and the laws of the realm
 into *rules of life*, as insignificant in judgment as rules
 of grammar. And the statutes of parliament may
 be good *statutes*, tho' they may secure the righteous
 punishments of offenders, as well as the gracious
 privileges of loyal subjects.—(2) If the hand of
 God is a good *hand* when it *resists the proud*, as well
 as when it *gives grace to the humble* ; and if his arm
 was a MERCIFUL arm when it *overthrew* [daring]
Pharaoh and his host in the red sea, as well as when
 it *made* [obedient] *Israel to pass thro' the midst of it* ;
 [See Ps. 136 ;] why cannot a message from God,
 which requires practicable obedience, and is enforced
 by promises of gracious rewards in case of compli-
 ance, and by threatnings of righteous punishments
 in case of non-compliance ;—why cannot, I say, such
 a message be called a GOOD MESSAGE, or GOSPEL ?
 —(3) Why should not a revelation from God be a
 good *revelation* or a *gospel*, when it displays the se-
 verity of his *justice* towards those who reject his gra-
 cious offers ; as well as the tenderness of his *compassion*
 towards those who accept them ; especially if we
 consider, that the *first* intention of the denunciations
 of his vindictive justice, is to excite the godly *fear*,
 which endears offers of mercy to sinners, and is in
 them *the beginning of wisdom* ?—(4) If, in the old
 testament, the sweetest and most joyful messages of
 God's grace are called *law* ; and if, in the new tes-
 tament, the most terrible denunciations of indigna-
 tion and wrath, tribulation and anguish are called *gospel* ;
 nothing in the world can be more unscriptural
 and absurd, than the antinomian Babel erected by some
 zealous Evangelists, who teach, that THE LAW of
 God is nothing but the doctrine of MERCILESS JUSTICE ;

TICE ; and that THE GOSPEL of *Christ* is nothing but the doctrine of LAWLESS GRACE ?

That the word LAW in the old testament, frequently means the sweetest gospel-promises, I prove, First, from these sayings of David, *THE LAW of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver*, Ps. cxix. 72.—*He hath remembered his [gospel-] covenant for ever*,—*which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath to Isaac, and confirmed the same unto Jacob for a LAW*, Ps. cv. 8, &c. Here the gospel-covenant made with the three chosen Patriarchs is called A LAW. Hence it is, that when Isaiah speaks of the brightest display of *gospel-grace* at the time that *the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains*, he says, *Out of Zion shall go forth THE LAW*. Is. ii. 2, 3.—Agreeably to this view of things we read in *Nehemiah*, that *All the people gathered themselves together as one man, and spake to Ezra to bring the book of THE LAW OF MOSES* :—*That the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of THE LAW* :—*That the Levites did read in THE LAW OF GOD distinctly, and gave the sense* :—*And that All the people went their way, &c. to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared to them* :—*And there was very great gladness* ;—*The joy of the Lord being their strength*. Neh. viii. 1, 3, 8, 10, 12, 17. Now, if THE LAW, which was read and explained to them, contained only the impracticable sanctions of a merciless, thundering justice ; were not all the people out of their senses, when they went their way with great gladness after hearing THE LAW expounded ?

The new testament confirms this account of the doctrines of *grace* and *justice*, and of the words *law* and *gospel*. When our Lord [who undoubtedly knew the exact meaning of the word *Gospel*] sent his disciples to *preach THE GOSPEL to every creature*, he charged them to declare, that *He who believeth not shall be damned*, as well as that *He who believeth shall be saved*, Mark. xvi. 16. Whence it evidently appears,

appears, that our Lord meant by **THE GOSPEL** the severe doctrines of *justice*, as well as the comfortable doctrine of *grace*.

St. Paul gives us exactly the same idea of *the gospel*. In the Ep. to the Romans, where he contends most for the gratuitous election of distinguishing love, he expostulates with those who *despise the riches of God's goodness, and treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds—eternal life to them, who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory;—but indignation and wrath to them, that obey not the truth*. If you ask St. Paul when God will thus display his merciful goodness, and tremendous justice; he directly answers, *When God shall judge the secrets of men* **ACCORDING TO MY GOSPEL**, that is, according to the promises and threatnings—the doctrines of grace and the doctrines of justice, which compose *the gospel* I preach, Rom. ii. 4—16.

Hence it is, that the apostle calls the Mosaic dispensation sometimes *the law*, and sometimes *the gospel*, while he styles the Christian dispensation, sometimes *the Law of Christ*, and sometimes *the Gospel of Christ*.

That St. Paul indifferently calls the Mosaic dispensation *law* and *gospel*, is evident from the following texts: *Every man that is circumcised is a debtor to the whole LAW*, Gal. v. 3. Here the word *law* undoubtedly means the *Mosaic dispensation*. Again, *To us was THE GOSPEL preached, as well as to them* [the Israelites who perished in the wilderness for not believing Moses] Heb. iv. 2. Whence it follows, that *to THEM* [the Israelites, who perished] *the gospel* [i. e. the doctrine of grace and justice] *was preached, as well as to us*, christians, who are saved by obedient faith. Once more: That what Moses preached to them, was a doctrine of *grace* and of *justice*, is evident from this consideration. Had the Mosaic gospel been a doctrine of mere *justice*,

justice, it could not have been a gospel like our gracious gospel: and had it been a mere doctrine of grace, the apostle could never have excited us, not to neglect our christian gospel, and great salvation, by pointing out to us the fearful destruction of the Israelites, who neglected their jewish gospel and salvation; lest any [christian] fall after the same example of unbelief. Heb. iv. 11.

With respect to the christian dispensation, the apostle calls it sometimes THE LAW: *The doers of THE LAW* [i. e. of the preceptive part of the gospel] shall be justified—when God shall judge the secrets of men according to MY GOSPEL, Rom. ii. 13, 16, compared with Mat. xii. 36, 37.—Sometimes he calls it THE LAW OF CHRIST: *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil THE LAW OF CHRIST*, Gal. vi. 2: sometimes the LAWS of God: *I will write MY LAWS* [i. e. my evangelical precepts and promises] *in their hearts*, Heb. viii. 10.—x. 16: sometimes *The LAW of the Spirit*, Rom. viii. 2: and sometimes *The Gospel of CHRIST*, Rom. i. 16. Hence it is, that, to be a christian believer, in St. Paul's language, is to be under THE LAW to Christ, 1 Cor. ix. 21.—As for St. James, he never calls the Christian dispensation gospel; but he simply calls it, either THE LAW, Jam. iv. 11, 12.—ii. 10:—THE LAW OF LIBERTY, Jam. ii. 12,—or, THE PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY, Jam. i. 25.—St. John uses the same language in his epistles, where he never mentions the word gospel, and where speaking of the sins of christian believers, he says, that *sin is the transgression of THE LAW*; whence it follows, that the *sin of CHRISTIANS*, is the TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW OF CHRIST, or of the holy doctrines of justice preached by Jesus Christ. To deny it would be asserting we cannot sin: for St. Paul informs us, that the Mosaic law is done away, 2 Cor. iii. 11. Now, if no christian is under the law of Moses, and if Christ never adopted the law of our nature, and never grafted the moral part of the Mosaic law into the christian dispensation,

or, in other terms, if Christ's gospel is a lawless institution, it necessarily follows, that no christian can sin: for *Sin is not imputed* or charged [that is, There is no sin] *where there is no law*, Rom. v. 13. Hence it is, that antinomian doctrines of grace represent fallen, adulterous, bloody, believers, as *spotless*, or *sinless* before God, in all their sins. Such is the necessary consequence of a lawless gospel armed with pointless "rules of life!" Such the dreadful tendency of *doctrines of GRACE* torn away from the *doctrines of JUSTICE*!

S E C T. II.

Remarks on the two GOSPEL-AXIOMS, or capital truths, upon which the doctrines of GRACE and JUSTICE are founded. Augustin himself once granted both those truths. Rigid Arminians indirectly deny the one, and rigid Calvinists the other. How the partial defenders of the doctrines of Justice and Grace try to save appearances, with respect to the part of the truth, which they indirectly oppose.

SO noble and solid a superstructure as the gospel [i. e. the scripture-doctrines of *grace* and *justice*] undoubtedly stands upon a noble and sure foundation. Accordingly we find, that the primitive gospel rests on two principles, the one *theological* and the other *moral*. These two principles, or, if you please, these two pillars of gospel-truth, may for distinction's sake, be called *Gospel-axioms*: at least I beg leave to call them so. Nor will the candid reader deny my request, if he considers the following demonstrations.

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I. AN AXIOM is a self-evident truth, which at once recommends itself to the understanding, or to the conscience of every unprejudiced man. Thus, *two and two makes four*, is an AXIOM in every counting-house. And that *The absolute necessity of all human actions is incompatible with a moral law and a day of judgment*, is an axiom in every unprejudiced mind.

II. The TWO GOSPEL-AXIOMS are the two principles, or capital self-evident truths, on which the primitive GOSPEL, [that is, the scripture-doctrine of *grace and justice*] is founded.

III. The FIRST Gospel-axiom bears up the holy doctrines of GRACE, and [when it is cordially received] is equally destructive of proud pharisaism and the unholy doctrines of lawless grace. This Axiom is the following self-evident truth, which recommends itself to the mind and conscience of every candid bible-christian. “Our FIRST talent or degree of salvation is MERELY of God’s FREE-GRACE IN CHRIST, without any work or endeavour of our own: and our ETERNAL SALVATION is ORIGINAL-
LY, CAPITALLY*, and FINALLY † of God’s FREE-
GRACE

* A solifidian would say *entirely*, and by this means he would leave no room for the *second* gospel-axiom, for the rewardableness of the works of faith, and for the doctrines of remunerative justice. But by saying *capitally*, we avoid this threefold mistake, we secure the honour of *holy* Free-grace, and shut the door against its counterfeit.

† By adding FINALLY, we show that the *top-stone*, as well as the *foundation-stone* of our eternal salvation, is to be brought with shouting *Grace! Grace!* unto it; because, if God had honoured his obedient saints with a sight of his heavenly glory for half an hour, and then suffered them to fall gently asleep in the bosom of oblivion, or to slide into a state of personal non-existence, he would have demonstrated his remunerative justice, and amply rewarded their best services. Hence it appears, that God’s giving *eternal* rewards of glory for a few temporary services, done by his own grace, is such an instance of *free-grace*, as nothing but *eternal* shouts of *Grace! Grace!* can sufficiently acknowledge. We desire our mistaken brethren to consider this

GRACE in *Christ*; THROUGH OUR NOT NEGLECTING that *first talent* or *degree of salvation*.—I say, thro' our not neglecting, &c. to secure the connexion of the two gospel-axioms, and to leave scripture-room for the doctrines of remunerative *justice*.

IV. The SECOND Gospel-axiom bears up the doctrines of JUSTICE, and extirpates the doctrine of Free-wrath. It is the following proposition, which, I believe, no candid bible-christian will deny. Our eternal damnation as ORIGINALLY § and PRINCIPALLY of our own personal FREE-WILL, thro' an obstinate and final neglect of the first talent or degree of salvation.

These two gospel-axioms may be thus expressed:
(1) OUR SALVATION IS OF GOD: or, THERE IS FREE-GRACE IN GOD, which, thro' Christ, freely places all men in a state of temporary redemption, justification, or salvation according to various gospel dispensations, and crowns those who are faithful unto death with an eternal redemption, justification, or

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remark; otherwise they will wrong the Truth and us, by continuing to say, that our doctrines of grace allow indeed Free-grace to lay the *foundation*, but that they reserve to the works of our rectified Free-will the honour of bringing the top-stone of our eternal salvation with saying *Works! Works! unto it*: A pharisaic doctrine this, which we abhor; loudly asserting that, altho' our free, unnecessitated obedience of faith intervenes, yet God in Christ is the *Omega* as well as the *Alpha*,—the end as well as the *beginning* of our ETERNAL salvation.

§ I add the word ORIGINALLY, to cut off the *self-excusing* opinion of those men, who charge their eternal damnation upon an absolute decree of reprobation, or upon Adam's first transgression.—As for the word PRINCIPALLY, it secures the part in the damnation of the wicked, which the scriptures ascribe to the *righteous* God; it being certain, (1) That God judicially hardens his slothful and unprofitable servants, by taking from them, at the end of their day of grace, the talent of softening grace, which they have obstinately buried: And (2) That he judicially reprobates, or damns them, by pronouncing this awful sentence, *Depart, ye cursed, &c.* A flame of vindictive justice belongs to the gospel of Christ, Heb. xii. 29, but not a single spark of Free-wrath.

salvation. — (2) OUR DAMNATION IS OF OURSELVES: or, THERE IS FREE-WILL IN MAN, by which he may thro' the grace freely imparted to him in the day of *temporary* salvation, work out his own *eternal* salvation; or, he may, [thro' the natural power which angels had to sin in heaven, and our first parents in paradise] chuse to sin away the day of temporary salvation. And by thus working out his damnation he may provoke *Just-wrath* [which is the same as *despised Free-grace*] to punish him with eternal destruction.

These two truths, or axioms, might be made still plainer, thus: (1) Our *gracious* and *just* God, in a day of salvation begun, sets life or death before us:—(2) As free-willing, assisted creatures, we may, during that day, chuse which we please: We may *stretch out our hand to the water, or to the fire.*—Or thus: (1) There is holy, righteous, and partial *Free-grace* in God: (2) There is *free-will* in *redeemed, assisted* man, whereby he is capable of obeying or disobeying God's holy, righteous, and partial *Free-grace.*—For conveniency's sake these axioms may be shortened thus: (1) *The doctrine of HOLY FREE-GRACE and partial mercy in God, is true.* (2) *The doctrine of RECTIFIED, ASSISTED FREE-WILL in man, and of IMPARTIAL JUSTICE in God, is true also.*

This lovely pair of evangelical propositions, appears to me so essential to the fulness and harmony of the gospel, that I doubt not but if *Pelagius* and *Augustin* themselves were alive, neither of them would dare *directly* to rise against it. Time, or envy, has destroy'd the works of *Pelagius*, the great assertor of *free-will* and the doctrines of *justice*; we cannot therefore support the doctrines of *free-grace* by *his* concessions: But we have the writings of *Augustin*, the great defender of God's distinguishing love, and the doctrine of *free-grace*: and yet, partial as he was to *these* doctrines, in an happy moment, he boldly stood up for *free-will*, and the doctrines

doctrines of justice. This appears from the judicious and candid questions, which he proposes in one of his epistles: [*si non est gratia Dei, quomodo salvat mundum? Si non est liberum arbitrium, quomodo judicat mundum?*] “*If there be not FREE-GRACE in God, how does he*” [graciously] “*save the world? If there be not FREE-WILL*” [in men,] “*how does He*” [righteously] “*judge the world?*”

To conclude: Whoever holds forth these two bible-axioms, [*There is FREE-GRACE in God, whence man's salvation GRACIOUSLY flows in various degrees*], and, [*There is FREE-WILL in every man, whence the damnation of all that perish, JUSTLY proceeds*]:—Whoever, I say, consistently holds forth these two self-evident propositions, is, in my humble judgment, a gospel-minister who *rightly dividest the word of truth*. He is a friend to both the doctrines of partial grace and impartial justice, of mercy and obedience, of faith and good works: In short, he preaches the primitive gospel, reunites the two opposite gospels of the day, and equally obviates the errors of *Honestus* and *Zelotes*, who stand up for these modern gospels.

If you ask what those errors are, I answer, *HONESTUS*, the Pelagian, or rigid Arminian, seldom preaches *Free-grace*, and never dwells upon the notorious partiality and absolute sovereignty, with which God at first distributes the various talents of his grace: And, when he preaches *Free-will*, he seldom preaches *free-will initially rectified* and *continually assisted by free-grace*; rarely, if ever, deeply humbling his hearers by displaying the *total helplessness of un-rectified and un-assisted Free-will*: and thus he veils the delightful doctrine of God's *Free-grace*, clouds the *evangelical* doctrine of man's *Free-will*, and inadvertently opens the door to self-conceited pharisaism.—On the other hand, *ZELOTES*, the solidian or rigid Calvinist, seldom or never preaches *rectified, assisted FREE-WILL*; he harps only on the doctrine of *absolute necessity*: and when

he preaches *Free-grace*, he too often preaches : (1) A *cruel* free-grace, which turning itself into *free-wrath*, with respect to a majority of mankind, absolutely passes them by, and consigns them over to everlasting, infallible damnation, by means of necessary fore-ordained sin : and (2) An unscriptural free-grace, which turning itself into *lawless fondness*, with respect to a number of favourite souls, *absolutely* ensures to them eternal redemption, complete justification, and finished salvation, be they ever so unfaithful.

By this means *Zelotes* spoils the doctrine of free-grace, undesignedly injures the doctrine of holiness, and utterly destroys the doctrine of justice. For when he denies that the greatest part of mankind have any interest in God's redeeming love ; when he intimates, that the doctrines of an absolute necessitating election to eternal life, and of an absolute necessitating rejection from eternal life, are true ; and that God's reprobates are not less necessitated to sin to the end and be damned, than God's elect are to obey to the end and be saved ; does he not pour contempt upon the throne of divine *justice* ? Does he not make the supreme judge, who fills that throne, appear as unwise when he distributes heavenly rewards, as cruel, when he inflicts infernal punishments ?

Honestus and *Zelotes* will probably think, that I misrepresent them. *Honestus* will say, that he cordially believes God is full of *free-grace* for all men, and that he only thinks it would be *unjust* in God to be *partial* in the distribution of his *free-grace*. But when *Honestus* reasons thus, does he not confound grace and justice ? Does he not sap the foundation of the throne of *grace*, under pretence of establishing the throne of *justice* ? If God cannot do what he pleases with his *grace*, and if *justice* always binds him in the distribution of his favours, does not his grace deserve the name of *impartial justice*, far better than the appellation of *free-grace* ?

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As *Honestus* tries to save appearances with regard to the doctrines of *grace*, so does *Zelotes*, with regard to the doctrines of *justice*. 'The gospel I preach, says he, is highly consistent with the doctrines of *justice*. I indeed intimate, that the elect are *necessitated* to believe and be eternally saved; and the reprobates, to sin on and be lost: but both this salvation of the elect, and damnation of the reprobates, perfectly agree with divine equity. For *Christ*, by his obedience unto death, *merited* the eternal salvation of all that shall be saved: and *Adam*, by his first act of disobedience, *deserved* the absolute reprobation of all that shall be damned. Our doctrines of *grace* are therefore highly consistent with the doctrines of *justice*.' This argument appears unanswerable to *Zelotes*; but I confess it does not satisfy me. For if the doctrine of *absolute necessity* is thus foisted into the gospel, and if *Christ* makes his elect people absolutely, and unavoidably willing to obey and go to heaven; whilst *Adam* makes his reprobate people absolutely and unavoidably willing to sin on and go to hell; I should be glad to know, how the elect can be *wisely judged* according to, and rewarded for, *their* faith and good works; and how the reprobates can be *justly sentenced* according to, and punished for, *their* unbelief and bad works. I repeat it, the doctrine of *absolute predestination* to life or death eternal, which is one and the same with the doctrine of an *absolute necessity* to believe or disbelieve, to obey or disobey to the last,—such a doctrine, I say, is totally subversive of the doctrines of *justice*. For reason depopes, that it is *absurd* to give to *necessary agents* a law, or rule of life, armed with promises of rewards, and threatnings of punishments. And conscience declares, that it is *unjust* and *cruel* to inflict fearful, eternal punishments upon beings, that have only moved or acted by *absolute necessity*; whether such beings are running streams, aspiring flames, falling stones, turning wheels, mad men, bound-thinkers,

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BOUND-WILLERS, or bound-agents; supposing such bound-thinkers, BOUND-WILLERS, and bound-agents did think, WILL, and act, as *unavoidably* as the wind raises a storm, and as *necessarily* as a fired cannon pours forth flames and destruction. Absolute necessity and a righteous judgment are absolutely incompatible. We must renounce the mistakes of rigid Calvinists, or give up the doctrines of justice.

S E C T. III.

By whom chiefly the gospel-axioms were systematically parted; and under what pretences prejudiced, good men tore asunder the doctrines of GRACE and JUSTICE; and rent the one primitive, catholick gospel, into the two partial gospels of the day.

FROM the preceding section it appears, that, to preach the gospel in its primitive purity, is so to hold forth and balance the two gospel-axioms, as to allow both *the doctrines of GRACE*, and *the doctrines of JUSTICE*, the place which is assigned them in the word of God: it is so to preach HOLY *Free-grace*, and RECTIFIED, ASSISTED *Free-will*, as equally to grind Pharisaism and Antinomianism [*the graceless and the lawless gospel*] between these two evangelical millstones. And thus the gospel was, in general, preached by good men for above three hundred years after Christ's ascension. If ever the tempter put successfully in practice his two capital maxims, *Confound and destroy,—Divide and conquer*, it was in the fourth century, when he helped *Pelagius* and *Augustin*, two warm disputants, openly

openly to *confound* what should have been properly distinguished, and systematically to *divide*, what should have been religiously joined; by which means they broke the balance of the doctrines of *grace* and *justice*. Nor did they do it out of malice: but thro' an immoderate regard for *ONE part* of the gospel: an injudicious regard this, which was naturally productive of a proportionable disregard for *THE OTHER part* of God's word.

PELAGIUS (we are told by *Augustin*) preached *free-will*; but, confounding *natural free-will* with *Free-will rectified and assisted by grace*, he made too much of *natural free-will*, and too little of God's *Free-grace*. The *left leg* of his gospel-system grew gigantic, whilst the *right leg* shrunk almost to nothing. And, commencing a *RIGID Free-willer*, he insisted upon the sufficiency of our natural powers, and dwelt on the *second* gospel-axiom, and the *doctrines of JUSTICE* in so partial a manner, that he almost eclipsed the *first* gospel-axiom, and the *doctrines of GRACE*.

AUGUSTIN, his co-temporary, under pretence of mending the matter, was guilty of an error exactly contrary. He so puffed up the *right leg* of his gospel-system, as to make it monstrous; while the *left* grew as slender and insignificant as a rotten stick. To bring this unhappy change about, in his controversial heats he confounded lawful, righteous free-grace with lawless, unscriptural, over-bearing free-grace; and, to make room for this latter, *imaginary* sort of grace, he sometimes turned *free-will* out of it's place, to give that place to *necessity*. Thus he commenced a *RIGID bound-willer*. The irresistible free-grace, which he preached, bound the elect by the chains of an unconditional election to life, absolutely *necessitating* them to repent, believe, and be eternally saved: whilst the irresistible free-wrath, which secretly advanced behind that over-bearing grace, bound the non-elect in chains of absolute reprobation, and *necessitated* them to sin on, and be unavoidably

unavoidably damned. By this means, new, unholy doctrines of *grace* and *wrath* jostled the holy, ancient doctrines of *grace* and *justice* out of their place. The two gospel-axioms did no longer agree : but the first axiom, becoming like Leviathan, swallowed up the second. For the moment irresistible, lawless free-grace, and despotic, cruel free-wrath mount the throne, what room is there for *holy, righteous* free-grace? What room for free-will? What room for the doctrines of *justice*? What room for the primitive gospel? Absolutely none; unless it be a narrow room indeed, artfully contrived under an heap of Augustinian contradictions, and Calvinian inconsistencies.

From this short account of *Pelagianism* and *Augustinism*, it is evident, that heated *Pelagius* (if the account given us be true) gave a desperate thrust to the *right* side of primitive christianity; and that heated *Augustin*, in his hurry to defend her, aimed a well-meant blow at *Pelagius*, but by overdoing it, and missing his mark, wounded the *left* side of the heavenly woman, who from that time has lain bleeding between these two rash antagonists. *The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water*, says the Wise Man. These *waters of strife*, which *Pelagius* and *Augustin* let in upon the church, by breaking the flood-gates of gospel-truth, soon overflowed the christian world, and at times, like the waters of the overflowing Nile, have almost been turned into blood. When streams of self-justifying, rigid, *Pelagian* free-will, have met with streams of self-electing, lawless, *Augustinian* free-grace; the strife has been loud and terrible. They have foamed out their own shame, and frightened thousands of travellers to Sion out of the noisy ways of a *corrupted* gospel, into the more quiet paths of infidelity.

For above a thousand years, these *waters of strife* have spread devastation thro' the *Christian* world; I had almost said also, thro' the *Mabometan* world: for *Mabomet*, who collected the filth of corrupt Christianity,

Christianity, derived these errors into his system of religion: *Omar* and *Hali*, at least, two of his relations and successors, became the leaders of two sects, which divide the Mahometan world. *Omar*, whom the Turks follow, stood up for bound-will, necessity, and a species of absolute Augustinian predestination. And *Hali*, whom the Persians revere, embraced rigid free-will and Pelagian free-agency. But the worst is, that these muddy waters have flowed, through the dirty channel of the Romish church, into all the protestant-churches, and have at times deluged them; turning, wherever they came, brotherly love into fierce contention. For, breaking the evangelical balance of the gospel-axioms is as naturally productive of polemical debates in the church, as breaking the parliamentary balance between the king and the people, is of contention and civil wars in the state. How this plague first infected protestantism, will be seen in the next section.

S E C T. IV.

LUTHER and **CALVIN** did not restore the balance of the gospel-axioms. That honour was reserved for **CRANMER**, the English reformer, who modelled the church of England very nearly according to the primitive gospel.—How soon the Augustinian doctrines of lawless grace preponderated.—How the Pelagian doctrine of unassisted free-will now preponderates.

WHEN the first reformers shook off the yoke of papistical trumperies, they fought gallantly for many glorious truths. But it is to be wished,

wished, that, whilst they warmly contended for the simple, scriptural dress of the primitive gospel, they had not forgotten to fight for some of it's very vitals, I mean the doctrines of *holy* FREE-GRACE, and *rec-tified, assisted* FREE-WILL. They did much good in many respects; so much indeed, that no grateful protestant can find fault with them without reluctance. But, after all, they did not restore the balance of the doctrines of *grace* and *justice*. *Luther*, the German reformer, being a monk of the order of *Augustin*, entered upon the reformation full of prejudices in favour of *Augustin*'s solifidian mistakes. And he was so busy in opposing the Pope of Rome, his indulgences, Latin masses, and other monastic fooleries, that he did not find time to oppose the Augustinian fooleries of fatalism, Manichean necessity, lawless grace, and free-wrath. On the contrary, in one of his heats, he broke the left scale of the gospel-balances, denied there was any such thing as *free-will*, and by that means gave a most destructive blow to the doctrines of *justice*: A rash deed, for which *Erasmus*, the Dutch Reformer, openly re-proved him, but with too much of the Pelagian spirit.

CALVIN, the French Reformer [who, after he had left his native country, taught divinity in the Academy of Geneva] far from getting light and learning moderation, by the controversy of *Luther* and *Erasmus*, rush'd with all the impetuosity of his ardent spirit into the error of heated *Augustine*; and so zealously maintained it, that from that time, it has been called *Calvinism*.

If *Calvin* did not grow wiser by the dispute of *Luther* and *Erasmus*; *Melancthon* another German Reformer did; and our great English Reformer *Cranmer*, who in wisdom, candor, and moderation, far exceeded the generality of the reformers on the continent, closely imitated his excellent example. Nay, to the honour of this favoured Island, and of *perfect* protestantism, in an happy moment he found the

the exact balance of the gospel-axioms. Read, admire, and obey his anti-Augustinian, anti-Pelagian, and apostolic Proclamation. "ALL MEN be also to be monished, and CHIEFLY PREACHERS, that, in this HIGH MATTER, they, looking on both sides" [i. e. *looking both to the doctrines of GRACE and the doctrines of JUSTICE*] "so attemper and moderate themselves, that neither they so preach the GRACE OF GOD" [*with beated Augustin*] "that they take away thereby FREE-WILL; nor on the other side, so extol FREE-WILL" [*with beated Pelagius*] "that injury be done to the GRACE OF GOD." *Erud. of a Christian Man. Sect. on Free-will*, which was added by Cranmer. Here you see the Balance of the doctrines of grace and justice, which Augustin and Pelagius had broken, and which Luther and Calvin had ground to dust in some of their overdoing moments,—you see, I say, that important balance perfectly restored by the English Reformer. With this short valuable quotation, as with a shield of impenetrable brass, ALL MEN and CHIEFLY PREACHERS, may quench all the fiery darts cast at the primitive gospel by the preachers of the partial gospels of the day; I mean the abettors of the *Augustinian*, or of the *Pelagian* error.

Mankind is prone to run into extremes. The world is full of men, who always overdo or underdo. Few people ever find the line of moderation, the golden mean: and of those who do, few stay long upon it. One blast or another of vain doctrine, soon drives them east or west from the meridian of pure truth. How happy would it have been for the church of England, if her first members had steadily followed the light, which our great Reformers carried before them. But alas, not a few of them had more zeal than moderation. *Cranmer* could not make all his fellow-reformers to see with his eyes. In the time of their popish superstition many

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of them had deeply imbibed the errors of St. Augustin, whom the church of Rome reveres as the greatest of the Fathers, and the holiest of the ancient saints : these good men finding, that his doctrine was countenanced by Luther, Calvin, Peter Martyr, Bucer, and others, whom they looked upon as oracles, soon relapsed into the Augustinian doctrines of lawless grace, from which some of them had never been quite disentangled. Even during Cranmer's confinement, [but much more after his martyrdom] they began to renounce the doctrines of *justice*, which were only indirectly secured in the xviith article of our church ; warmly contending for the doctrines of necessitating grace, which are always destructive of the doctrines of *justice*. Thus, while some of them erected the canopy of a lawless, solifidian free grace over some men elected according to Calvin's notions of an absolute election to eternal life ; others cast the sable net of *free-wrath* over the rest of mankind ; imagining that from all eternity most men were absolutely predestinated to eternal death according to the Calvinian doctrine of absolute unconditional reprobation. Thus the balance of the gospel-axioms which Cranmer [considering the times] had maintained to admiration, was again broken. Rigid Calvinism got the ascendancy ; the doctrines of *justice* were publicly decried as popery and heresy, almost all England over. All the reprobates were exculpated : by the doctrine of necessity, their unavoidable continuance in sin, and their damnation, were openly charged upon God and Adam. Decrees of absolute predestination to necessary holiness and eternal salvation, and statutes of absolute appointment to necessary sin and eternal damnation, began currently to pass for gospel. And the *doctrines of justice* were swept away, as if they had been poisonous *cobwebs spun by popish spiders*. Hence it is, that the Rev. Mr. Toplady, describing the triumphs of rigid Calvinism in the

the days of Queen Elizabeth, says in his letter to Dr. Nowell, p. 45, that " Those who held this opinion, of God's not being any cause of sin and damnation, were at that time mightily cried out against, by the main body of our reformed church, as *Fautors of false religion*"—and, " That to be called a FREE-WILL-MAN, was looked upon as a *shameful reproach, and opprobrious infamy*; yea, and that a person so termed was deemed HERETICAL."—A proof this, that Dr. *Peter Heylin* speaks the truth when he says, " It was safer for any man in those times, to have been looked upon as an *beathen or publican*, than an *anti-calvinist*."

Should the judicious reader ask how it happened, that the doctrines of unscriptural grace, free-wrath, and necessity, were so soon substituted for the doctrines of genuine Free-grace and rectified, assisted Free-will, which Cranmer had so evangelically maintained; I answer, that, altho' *Thomas Aquinas* and *Scotus*, the leading divines of the church of Rome, thro' their great veneration for *Augustine*, leaned too much towards the lawless, wrathful doctrines of grace; yet *Luther*, *Calvin*, and *Zuinglius* leaned still more towards that extreme. This was soon observed by some of the popish Doctors: and as they knew not how to make a proper stand against the genuine doctrines of the reformation, they were glad to find a good opportunity of opposing the reformers, by opposing the Augustinian mistakes which *Luther* and *Calvin* carried to the height. Accordingly leaving the extreme of *Augustin*, to which they had chiefly leaned before, many of the Popish divines began to lean towards the extreme of *Pelagius*, and commenced rigid and partial defenders of the doctrines of *justice*, which the German, French, and Swiss reformers had indirectly destroyed, by overthrowing the doctrine of *free-will*, which is inseparably connected with the doctrine of a day of *just judgment*. Hence it is, that, at the council of *Trent*,

which the Pope had called to stop the progress of the reformation, the papists took openly the part of the *second* gospel-axiom; and in the spirit of contradiction began warmly to oppose Augustine's mistakes, which the first Jesuits had ardently embraced; *Bellarmino* himself not excepted. Party-spirit soon blew up the partial zeal of the contending divines. Protestant-bigory ran against Popish bigotry; and the effect of the shock was a driving of each other still farther from the line of scripture-moderation. Thus many Papists, especially those who wrote against the Calvinian protestants, became the partial supporters of the doctrines of *justice*, while their opponents shewed themselves the partial vindicators of the doctrines of *grace*. Hence it is, that, in the popish countries, those who stood up for faith and distinguishing *free-grace*, began to be called Hereticks, Lutherans and Solifidians; whilst, in the protestant countries, those who had the courage to maintain the doctrines of *justice*, good works, and unneccessitated obedience, were branded as Papists, Merit-mongers and Hereticks.

Things continued in this unhappy state, till oppressed truth made new efforts to shake off the yokes put upon her. For the scales, which hold the weights of the sanctuary, [the two gospel-axioms] Lover and shift, till they have attained their equilibrium; just as the disturbed needle of a compass quivers and moves, till it has recovered it's proper situation, and points again due north. This new shifting happened in the last century, when *Arminius*, a protestant divine, endeavoured to rescue the doctrines of *justice*, which were openly trampled under foot by most protestants; and when *Janse-nius*, a popish bishop, attempted to exalt the doctrines of *distinguishing grace*, which most divines of the church of Rome had of late left to the protestants. But *Jansenius*, overdoing after Augustine, brought the doctrines of unscriptural grace and free-wrath with a full tide into the church of Rome;

while

while *Arminius*, (or, at least, some of his followers) drove them with all his might out of the protestant churches.

Many countries were in a general ferment on this occasion. A great number of protestant divines assembled at *Dort* in Holland, confirmed Calvin's indirect opposition to the doctrines of *justice*, and condemned *Arminius* after his death; for, during his life, none cared to attack him: such was the reputation he had, even through Holland, both for learning and exemplary piety! On the other hand, the Pope, with his conclave, imitating the partiality of the synod of *Dort*, *injudiciously* condemned *Jansenius* and his Calvinism, and by this means did an injury to the doctrines of *grace*, which *Jansenius* warmly contended for. But truth shall stand, be it ever so much opposed by either partial protestants or partial papists. Therefore, notwithstanding the decisions of the Popish conclave, *Jansenism* and the doctrines of *Grace* continued to leaven the church of Rome: Whilst notwithstanding the decisions of the protestant synod, *Arminianism* and the doctrines of *Justice*, continued to spread thro' the protestant churches.

Archbishop *Laud*, in the days of King James and *Charles* the first, caused in the gospel-scales the turn, which then began to take place in our church in favour of the doctrines of *justice*. He was the chief instrument, which, like Moses's rod, began to part the boisterous sea of *rigid* Calvinism. He received his light from *Arminius*: but it was corrupted by a mixture of *Pelagian* darkness. He aimed rather at putting down absolute *reprobation* and lawless grace, than at clearing up the scripture-doctrine of a partial *Election*, doing justice to the doctrines of *grace*, and reconciling the contending parties, by reconciling the two gospel-axioms. Hence it is that passing beyond the scripture-meridian, he led most of the English clergy from one extreme to the other. For now it is to be feared, that the generality of them are gone as far West, as they were before East, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. The *first* Gospel-axiom formerly preponderated; and now the *second*

goes swiftly down. *Free-will* is, in general cried up in opposition to *Free-grace*, as excessively and *Pelagianistically* [if I may use the expression] as in the beginning of the last century, *Free-grace* was unreasonably and *Calvinistically* set up in opposition to *Free-will*. I say in general, because, altho' most of our pulpits are fill'd with preachers, who *Pelagianize* as well as *Honestus*, there are still a few divines, who, like *Zelotes*, strongly run into the *Calvinian* extreme.

But however, sooner or later, judicious, moderate men will convince the christian world, that the gospel equally comprizes the doctrines of *grace*, and of *justice*; and that it consists of *promises* to be *believed*, and *precepts* to be *observed*; *gracious* promises and *holy* precepts, which are armed with the sanction of proper rewards or punishments, and are as incompatible with *Pelagian* self-sufficiency, as with the *Calvinian* doctrines of lawless grace and free-wrath. And as soon as this is clearly and practically understood by christians, primitive unity and harmony will be restored to the partial gospels of the day.

S E C T. IV.

What the two modern gospels are.—Their dreadful consequences.—Arminius tried to find the way of truth between these two gospels, but perhaps missed it a little.—The rectifying of his mistakes lately attempted.

BY the two modern gospels, I mean Pelagianism or rigid Arminianism, and the doctrine of absolute necessity or rigid Calvinism. The former is a gospel, which so exalts the doctrines of *justice*, as to obscure the doctrines of *partial grace*:—A gospel, which so holds forth the *second* gospel-axiom, as to hide the glory of the first either in whole or in part.

Rigid

Rigid Calvinism, on the other hand, is a gospel, which so extols the doctrines of distinguishing grace, as to eclipse the doctrines of justice: — a gospel which so holds forth the *first* gospel-axiom, as to hide the glory of the *second* in whole or in part. The fault of these two systems of doctrine consists in parting, or in not properly balancing the doctrines of grace and of justice.

The confusion, which this error has occasioned in the churches of Christ for above a thousand years, should [one would think] have opened the eyes of all overdoing and underdoing divines, and made them look out for a safe passage between the *Pelagian* and the *Calvinian* rocks. That any good men should continue unconcernedly to run the bark of their orthodoxy against those fatal rocks of error is really astonishing; especially if we consider, that nobody can look into ecclesiastical history without seeing the marks of the numerous wrecks of truth and love, which they have caused. Wide, however as the empire of prejudice is, Candor is not yet turned out of the world. In all the churches of Christ there are men, who will yet hear scripture and reason. But many of them, thro' a variety of avocations, thro' an Indolence of disposition, or thro' despair of finding the exact truth, tamely submit to what appears to them a remediless evil. They are sorry, that christians should be so divided: but not seeing any prospect of ending our deplorable divisions, they quietly walk in *Pelagian* or *Calvinian* ways, without seeking the unbeaten path of truth, which exactly lies between those two frequented roads. One of the reasons, why they take up so readily with the *Pelagian* or *Calvinian* system, is their not considering the dreadful evils which flow from each, some of which I shall set before the reader. I have already observed, that the error of *Pelagius* [if St. Augustin and his votaries do not wrong him] consists in exalting *free-will* and *human powers* so as to leave little or no room for the exertion of *free grace* and *divine power*: And that on the other

other hand, the error of *Augustin* and *Calvin* consists in so exalting irresistible *Free-grace* openly, and irresistible *free-wrath* secretly, that there is no reasonable room left for the exertion of faithful or unfaithful *free-will*, or indeed for any *free-will* at all. Now in the very nature of things, these two opposite extremes lead to the most dangerous errors. I begin with enumerating those, which belong to the *Pelagian* extreme.

Reason and experience show, that, when the **PELAGIAN** error rises to its height, it leads men into *Arianism*, *Socinianism*, *Deism*, and, sometimes, into *avowed Fatalism* or *Popish Pharisaism*.

(1) By **ARIANISM** I mean the doctrine of *Arius*, a Divine of Alexandria, who lived about the time of Pelagius, and not only insinuated, that man was not so fallen as to need an omnipotent Redeemer, whose name is *GOD with us*; but openly taught, that Christ was *only* an exalted, super-angelical CREATURE.

(2) **SOCINIANISM** is the error of *Socinus*, a learned, moral man, who lived since the reformation, and had such high notions of man's free-will and powers, that he thought man could save himself even without the help of a **SUPER-ANGELICAL** Redeemer. And accordingly he asserted, that Christ was a **MERE MAN**, like Moses and Elias, and that his blood had no more power to atone for sin, than that of Abel or St. Paul.

(3) **DEISM** is the error of those, who carry matters still higher, and think that man is so perfectly able by the exertions of his own mere free-will and natural powers, to recommend himself to the mercy of the Supreme Being, that he needs *no Redeemer at all*. Hence it is, that altho' the Deists still believe in *God* [and on that account, assume the name of *Theists* or *Deists*], they make no more of *Christ* and the bible, than of the Pope and his mass-book, and look upon the doctrines of the *incarnation* and the *Trinity* as wild and idolatrous conceits.

(4) **AVOWED**

(4) **AVOWED FATALISM** is the error of those, who believe, that *whatever is, is right*; and that all things happen [and, of consequence, that all sins are committed] of **FATAL, absolute necessity**. This is an error into which *immoral* deists are very apt to run: for, when they feel guilt upon their consciences, as they have no idea of a mediator to take it away, they wish that their bad actions had been *necessary*, that is, absolutely brought on by the stars, or caused by God's decrees, which would fully exculpate them. And as this doctrine eases their guilty consciences, they first desire that it might be true, and by little and little, persuade themselves that it is so, and publickly maintain their error. Hence it is that immoral deists, such as Voltaire and many of his followers, are avowed fatalists.

(5) *Jewish Pharisaism* is the error of those, who are such strangers to the doctrines of grace, as to think they have no need of the rich mercy which God extends to poor publicans. Fancying themselves righteous they thank God for their supposed goodness, when they should finite upon their breasts on account of their real depravity. **POPISH PHARISAISM** is an error still more capital. Those who are deep in it not only take little notice of the doctrines of grace, but carry their ideas of the doctrines of justice to such unscriptural and absurd lengths as to imagine, that their penances can make a proper atonement for their sins; that God is, strictly speaking, their debtor on account of their good works; and that they cannot only merit the reward of eternal life for themselves by their good deeds, but deserve it also for others by their *works of supererogation*, and thro' their *superabundant obedience and goodness*; a conceit so detestable, that, one would think, it needs only be mentioned to be fully exploded, and perfectly abhorred.

Dreadful as are these consequences of *Pelagianism* carried to its height, the consequences of *Augustinism*, or *Calvinism*, carried also to its height, are not
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at all better. For, the demolition of *free-will*, and the setting up of *irresistible, electing Free-grace*, and *absolute*, reprobating free-wrath lead to *Antinomianism, Manicheism, disguised Fatalism, widely-reprobating bigotry, and self-electing presumption or self-reprobating despair*. The four first of these errors need explanation.

I. ANTINOMIANISM is the error of such *rigid Calvinists* as exalt *Free-grace* in so injudicious a manner; and make so little account of *Free-will*, and its startings aside out of the way of duty; as to represent sin, at times, like a mere bug-bear, which can no more hurt the believer, who now commits it, than scare-crows can hurt those, who set them up. They assert, that if a sinner has once believed, he is not only safe, but eternally and completely justified from all *future* as well as past iniquities. The Pope's indulgencies are nothing to those, which these mistaken evangelists preach. I have heard of a bishop of Rome, who extended his popish indulgencies, pardons, and justifications, to any crime which the indulged man might commit within ten years after date: but these preach *finished salvation* in the full extent of the word, without any of our own works, and by that means they extend their protestant indulgencies to all eternity—to all believers in general—and to every crime, which each of them might chuse to commit. In a word, they preach the inamissible, complete justification of all fallen believers, who add murder to adultery, and an hypocritical show of godliness to incest. Antinomianism, after all, is nothing but *rigid Calvinism* dragged to open light by plain-spoken preachers, who think that truth can bear the light, and that no honest man should be ashamed of his religion.

II. MANICHEISM is the capital error of *Manes*, a Persian, who attempting to mend the gospel of Christ, demolished free-will, made man a mere passive tool, and taught, that there are two principles in the godhead, the one *good*, from which flows all the

the *good*, and the other *bad*, from which flows all the *evil* in the world. *Augustin* was once a *Manichee*, but afterwards he left their sect, and refuted their errors. And yet, astonishing! when he began to lean to the doctrine of absolute predestination, he ran again, unawares, into the capital error of *Manes*. For if all the *good* and *bad* actions of angels, devils, and men, have their source in God's *absolute predestination*, and *necessitating decrees*; it follows, that *vice* absolutely springs from the *predestinating* God, as well as *virtue*; and, of consequence, that *rigid Calvinism* is a branch of *Manicheism* artfully painted with fair colours borrowed from christianity.

III. DISGUISED FATALISM is nothing but an *absolute necessity* of doing good or evil, according to the overbearing decrees, or forcible influences of *Manes's* God, who is made up of *free-grace* and of *free-wrath*, that is, of a *good* and a *bad* principle. I call this doctrine DISGUISED FATALISM: (1) Because it implies the *absolute necessity* of our actions; a necessity this, which the heathens called FATE: and (2) Because it is so horrible, that even those who are most in love with it, dare not look at it without some veil, or DISGUISE. As the words *Fatalism—Evil God—Good Devil*, or *Manichean Deity*, are not in the bible; the christian fatalists do what they can to cover their error with decent expressions. The *good principle* of their deity they accordingly call *Free-grace*, or *Everlasting, unchangeable Love*. From this good principle flows their *absolute election* and *finished salvation*. With respect to the *bad principle*, it is true that they dare not openly call it *free-wrath*, or *everlasting, unchangeable hatred*, as the honest *Manichees* did; but they give you dreadful hints, that it is a *sovereign* something in the God-head, which *necessitates* reprobated angels and men to sin:—something which *ordains* their fall, and absolutely *passes them by* when they are fallen;—something which marks out unformed, unbegotten victims for the slaughter, and says to them [according to

to unchangeable decrees productive of absolute necessity] "Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire; "for I passed you by: my absolute reprobation "eternally secured your sin, and your continuance "in sin: and now, my unchangeable, everlasting "wrath absolutely secures your eternal damnation. "Go, ye absolutely-reprobated wretches,—go, and "glorify my free-wrath, which flamed against you, "before the foundation of the world. My curses "and reprobation are without repentance."—There is not a grain of equity in all this speech: and yet it agrees as truly with *rigid* Calvinism as with the above-described branch of Manicheism: it falls in as exactly with the necessitating, good-bad principle of *Manes*, as with the necessitating, good-bad principle of lawless *free-grace*, and absolute *sovereignty*—the softer name, which some gospel-ministers decently give to *free-wrath*.

IV. *Wide-reprobating Bigotry* is the peculiar sin of the men, who make so much of the doctrines of partial *grace*, as to pay little or no attention to the doctrines of impartial *justice*. This detestable sin was so deeply rooted in the breasts of the Jews, that our Lord found himself obliged to work a miracle, that he might not be destroyed by it before his hour was come. Because the Jews were the peculiar, and elected people of God, they uncharitably concluded, that all the heathens, i. e. all the rest of mankind, were absolutely reprobated, or at least that God would shew them no mercy, unless they became proselytes of the gate, and directly or indirectly embraced judaism. And therefore when Christ told them that many gentiles would come from the east and west, and sit with Abraham in the kingdom of God, whilst many of the Jews would be cast out; and when he reproved their bigotry by reminding them, that in the days of Elijah God was more gracious to an heathen widow, than to all the widows that dwelt in Judea; they flew into a rage, and attempted to throw him down from the

top of the craggy hill, on which the town of Nazareth was built. It is the same wide-reprobating bigotry, which makes the *rigid* Romanists think, that there is no salvation out of their church. Hence also the *rigid* Calvinists imagine that there is no saving grace, but for those who share in their election of grace. It is impossible to conceive what bad tempers, fierce zeal, and bloody persecutions, this reprobating bigotry has caused in all the churches and nations, where the privileges of electing love have been carried beyond the scripture mark. Let us with candor read the history of the churches and people who have engrossed to themselves all the saving grace of God, and we shall cry out, From such a fierce election, and such reprobating bigotry Good Lord deliver us!

I make no doubt but this sketch of the dangerous errors, to which *RIGID Pelagianism* and *RIGID Calvinism* lead unwary christians, will make the judicious reader afraid of these partial gospels, and will increase his thankfulness to God for the primitive gospel, which, by its doctrines of *grace*, guards us against *rigid Pelagianism* and its mischievous effects; and, by its doctrines of *justice*, arms us against *rigid Calvinism* and its dangerous consequences.

Among the divines abroad, who have endeavoured to steer their doctrinal course between the *Pelagian* shelves and the *Augustinian* rocks, and who have tried to follow the reconciling plan of our great Reformer *Cranmer*, none is more famous, and none came nearer the truth than *Arminius*. He was a pious and judicious Dutch minister, who in the beginning of the last century, taught divinity in the university of *Leiden* in *Holland*. He made some noble efforts to drive *Manicheism*, and *disguised Fatalism*, out of the protestant-church, of which he was a member: and, so far as his light and influence extended [by proving the evangelical union of Redeeming grace and Free-will] he restored scripture-

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harmony

harmony to the gospel, and carried on the plan of reconciliation, which Cranmer had laid down. His sermons, lectures, and orations, made many ashamed of absolute reprobation, and the bad-principled God, who was before quietly worshipped all over Holland. Nevertheless his attempt was partly unsuccessful: for, attacking *free-wrath* [or the *bad principle* of the Manichean God,] without setting *free-grace* in its full gospel-light, and without properly granting the *election* of grace, which St. Paul contends for; he gave the Calvinists just room to complain. They availed themselves so skilfully of his embarrassment about the doctrine of election, and they pleaded so plausibly for the sovereignty of the good-principled God, as to keep their absolute reprobation, and the sovereignty of the bad-principled God partly out of sight. In short, implacable *free-wrath* escaped, by means of antinomian *free-grace*. The venomous scorpion concealed itself under the wing of the simple dove; and the double-principled Deity, the sparingly electing and widely-reprobating god, was still held forth to injudicious protestants, as the God of all grace—the *God of love*—the God in whom is no darkness at all. For, as I have already observed, a number of divines after the heart of *Calvin*, assembled at *Dort* in Holland, and openly condemned there the efforts that *Arminius* had made to reconcile the doctrines of justice and the doctrines of grace: the clergy who had espoused his sentiments were deprived of their livings; he himself was represented as the author of an *heresy* almost as dangerous as that of *Pelagius*: and, from that time, the rigid Calvinists have considered all those who stand up for the two gospel-axioms with any degree of consistency, as *semi-Pelagian*, or *Arminian* heretics.

And if Mr. *Baile* is not mistaken, the Calvinists did not complain of *Arminius's* doctrine altogether without reason; for, although he went very far in his discovery of the passage between the *Pelagian* and the *Augustinian* rocks, yet he did not fail quite through.

Election

Election proved a rock, on which his doctrinal bark stuck fast; nor could he ever get entirely clear of that difficulty.

Among our English divines, several have greatly distinguished themselves, by their improvements upon Arminius's discoveries, Bishop Overal, Bishop Stillingfleet, Bishop Bull, Chillingworth, Baxter, Whitby, and others. But, if I am not mistaken, they have all stuck where *Arminius* did, or on the opposite rock. And there-about we stuck too, when Mr. Wesley got happily clear of a point of the Calvinian rock, which had retarded our course; and [so far as he appeared to us to be guided by the Father of lights] we began to sail on with him thro' the straits of truth. When we left our moorings, the partial defenders of the doctrines of grace hung out a signal of distress, and cried to us that our doctrinal ark was going to be lost against the same cliff, where Pelagius's bark went to pieces. Their shouts have made us wary. The Lord has, we humbly hope, blessed us with an anchor of patient hope, a gale of cheerful love of truth, and a shield of resignation to quench the fiery darts, which some warm men, who defend the barren rock of absolute reprobation, have thrown at us in our passage. We have sounded our way, as we went on; and, looking steadily to our theological compass, [the scriptures] to the sun of righteousness, [the Lord Jesus Christ] and to the stars, which he holds in his right hand, [the apostles and true evangelists] after sailing slowly six years thro' straits, where strong currents of error and hard gales of prejudice have often retarded our progress; we flatter ourselves, that we have got quite out of those narrow and rocky seas, where most divines have been stopped for a long succession of ages. If we are not mistaken, the ancient haven of gospel-truth is in sight; and, while we enter in, I take a sketch of it, which the reader will see in a plan of *Reconciliation* between the Calvinists and Arminians, which these sheets are designed to introduce.

T H E E N D.

ERRATA.

Page. Line.

- 12 11 *Perceptive* read *preceptive*
- 14 4 *makes* read *make*
- 25 35 *Reformers* read *Reformer*
- 27 11 Dele the Commas before the *line*
- 28 38 *But* read *Thus*
- 34 18, 21, 26 *indulgencies* read *indulgents*.

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